

THE PROMISES TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES

David Baker, Presbytery Word for week commencing Sunday 2 August 2026

Transcription of recording, slightly edited

We are going to begin to look at some of the seven promises in more detail, but to orientate a little bit, let us refer to that key verse again which has already been read to us. It is Revelation chapter 22 verse 12 where Jesus says, 'And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to everyone according to his work.' The word that is translated 'reward' is the same as 'wages'. Christ is coming and His wages are with Him. The simple point is that all the wages belong to Him because He is the one who has done all the work. He earned all the wages when He did our work from the garden of Gethsemane to the cross. He fulfilled the works of our sonship. He learned our obedience. He has completed the work, not only for this age, but for the age to come. All the wages are His.

He then comes and He is promising to share those wages with us as our inheritance, as we are joined to Him in the fellowship of His offering, and fulfilling the works that He has already accomplished for us. He is sharing them with us as our inheritance.

In the first case, that inheritance is being built into the glory of your heavenly body. For the person who dies in Christ before He physically returns, they inherit their heavenly body now. Then on the day of resurrection they will return with Christ and He will compose an immortal, incorruptible, physical body for them from the dust, and they will step into it. This is similar to the way that Jesus stepped into His resurrection body. That body will be clothed with the glory of the heavenly body, making it a spiritual body.

For those of us who are alive and remaining when Christ returns, He will come, and by His word (it is by His word), He will change our physical body so that it becomes incorruptible and immortal. It will then be clothed with the glory of our heavenly body. Again, it becomes a spiritual body. That is where you are receiving your inheritance.

There is also a dimension of reward which we are talking about over the course of this weekend that we receive while we are still in our mortal body. That is here and now. It has a particular application for the time of the end. The seven promises to the seven churches (as we have already heard) comprise the reward of Christ. He keeps making that point to the seven churches: 'Behold I am coming quickly.' We add to that, 'Behold I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me.'

Jesus is speaking to the presbyteries of each lampstand church, but we are all given a participation in the reward. The key point concerning the reward is to go and look for worthy houses. Jesus spelt this out very clearly after He sent the 12 apostles. [Matthew 10] He said to them, 'He who receives you, receives Me.' He continued by saying, 'Whoever receives a prophet in the name of a prophet, receives a prophet's reward.' What the Lord is doing in our day is restoring the Elijah ministry. There is a restoration of that prophetic ministry that is turning the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the children to the fathers. A presbytery functioning according to the Elijah ministry is ministering in the name of Christ who is the Prophet. He is the source of the Elijah ministry. But everyone who receives the ministry of the Prophet (or that prophetic ministry) is receiving the same reward. It is a very simple principle that Jesus is describing for us. He is speaking to the presbyteries, but then he who receives the word that is proclaimed by the presbyteries, as they are being recovered, they receive the same promise or the same reward. Then He continues, 'He who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man receives a righteous man's reward.' So it is going to multiply further. When the 144 000 are sent by the presbytery around the Father's throne to look for worthy houses, they are heading out, and you can picture them: The righteous men are heading

out, and whoever receives their ministry, they are going to receive a share in the same reward. It is going to actually grow to a great multitude - all gathered into these promises.

To make one final point here as we are orientating ourselves: What does the reward look like if we are going to summarise it in a very simple way? I think all the children will be able to connect to this. You have done a good job. Here the Lord comes and He says, 'I have your reward for your work that you have done.' What does it look like? It looks like more work. Now, you would think that that is a bit of a rough deal. You have been tirelessly working away. but remember that you are doing it by grace. It is His grace, and you are only doing what He has already accomplished for you. You cannot get too much reward for it; and the reward is pretty good. But what I am saying is the reward is not that you have done a fantastic job and you can put your feet up. The reward is, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. Here is some more work for you to do. You have been faithful in that which is least. Now be faithful in that which is much.' [Matthew 25 verse 23]

All the parables teach us that, but the verse I am using to substantiate this is in the book of Isaiah chapter 40 verse 10, where Isaiah says, 'Behold, the Lord God shall come with a strong hand, and His arm shall rule for Him; behold, His reward is with Him, and His work before Him.' He is coming with a reward, and the reward is that He is going to give you more work. But it is a very unique kind of work, and it is a tremendous privilege, because it is the privilege of becoming a co-worker with Him in the administration that is suitable for the fullness of times that will harvest over half the world's population. That is a pretty good reward. That is the tremendous dignity that the Lord is going to bestow upon us. With that orientation, let us begin to look at these promises.

Ephesus

I am going to look at Ephesus, and we will briefly touch on Smyrna if we have time. Let

us go to Revelation chapter 2 and verse 1. You will be very familiar with these passages. This is Revelation 2 verses 1 to 4. It says, 'To the angels [that is the presbytery] of the church of Ephesus write, "These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands [We know that Christ is physically seated at the right hand of God in His spiritual body on His intrinsic throne at the right hand of God. But He is nonetheless walking through His lampstand churches. He is doing it by extending His hand with the stars in His right hand. That is how He walks among His lampstand churches in every nation. It is through the messengers in His right hand.

In verse 2, He is speaking to the messengers. He is speaking to the presbytery in the first case, but as we just keep making the point, it is, 'He who has an ear to hear what the Spirit says to the churches.' This is not just the presbytery; but then it is not just the church; it is the *churches*. All these messages are relevant for every lampstand church in every place. He is saying to the presbytery and to all of us]: I know your works.'" That is where He starts. Then, 'Behold, I am coming quickly and My reward is with Me to give to everyone according to his work.' [Revelation 22 verse 12] He starts every letter to the seven churches by saying, 'I know your works.' That is where He begins.

He then finishes every letter with the promise 'to him who overcomes...'. There is a reward in relation to the work. When He is saying, 'I know your works... [that is a double-edged sword - He is saying, 'I know what you are doing; but I also know (and this is more important), I know what you *should* be doing because I am the One who has completed all your works. I know your works. I am intimately acquainted with all your works. I have accomplished them all for you. I am coming to call you back and to the degree it is necessary to repent from doing your own dead works, and to turn and embrace the works that I have already done for you. The Spirit will connect you to that.'

So catch that sense. 'I know your works.' There is a lot in that statement.]

...I know your works and your labour, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil [He is talking to the presbytery here in Ephesus and He is saying, 'Alright, I am commending you; you are committed to sanctified Christian living; you are maintaining lines of sanctification; You hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans - all these things]. You have tested those who say that they are apostles... [You are not interested in self-appointed, itinerant ministers coming through who are proclaiming their own word and all these things.] ...You have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; and you have persevered and have patience, and have laboured for My name's sake and have not become weary [This a very interesting one to me, because if we are maintaining a projection, then we will inevitably become weary and heavy laden. So there are obviously some men here who are ministering according to their name. They are sort of falling on their feet a little bit. They should be where they are, but they are not properly connected to the fellowship of Yahweh, as we will see. He then rebukes them because they have left their first love] 'Nevertheless I have this against you that you have left your first love.'

I think we are really coming to understand this in a fresh way in this season, and all the points of application. The Lord is broadening our view on how we understand this. 'You have left your first love.' The key point is that first love (the foremost of all loves) is the fellowship of Yahweh. 'You have fallen from the fellowship of Yahweh.'

Jesus was addressing the presbytery about their loss of first love, but the issue was far deeper than how they related with one another as a presbytery. There is no doubt that they had a collegial presbytery and there was a lack of first love - there was a dysfunction in the presbytery; but that was symptomatic of a much deeper issue. That is the key point. Jesus is not just addressing

the way the presbytery relates, He is addressing every presbyter on the core problem - the much deeper issue. The way they were relating in the presbytery was symptomatic of this. We need to consider (and this is true for all of us) how far we have fallen from first love (which is the fellowship of Yahweh) in relation to our personal sonship; then in relation to our marriage; then in relation to our houses; then in relation to our house-to-house fellowship as a congregation, and then in relation to the presbytery. There is a sequence of reformation for a marriage to be recovered.

We are in a season of marriage reformation, and we are realising that when we courted and married, we did so for all kinds of different reasons. There were all kinds of different dynamics at work. During that phase (as Vic has been saying) all that concrete was being poured in around the reo and so we have the dynamics of our relationship that need to be renegotiated. There is a reformation that is necessary for all of us. That is only possible as both husband and wife are receiving the word of Christ that is being proclaimed to them by the conviction and illumination of the Holy Spirit and making an accountable response to that, because you need both individuals choosing for that reformation to happen in terms of the recovery of a one-spirit relationship.

We go to the next step (in terms of a house) where you have parents and children. There needs to be a reformation in the marriage so that you have a one-spirit marriage, otherwise, in terms of the house, there will be a gap that the children will be able to walk through. If, in terms of a marriage, you have one spiritual and one carnal person, then obviously the spiritual person can stand in the gap. But you still have a gap. One believing parent can sanctify the children in that sense, but to have no gap, you need the marriage reformed. The sanctification and the fellowship in the house are dependent upon that.

Then going to the next step – house-to-house fellowship. It is dependent upon the reformation of every house because if there is reformation not happening in the house, then when we are participating in house-to-house fellowship, it is going to be a projection. All these things are in a sequence.

Once you get to the presbytery, if a presbyter is not actually finding reformation in terms of his marriage in his own house and then participating in a house-to-house fellowship... (This is where eldership emerges. It is like Stephanus, where Paul says, 'You know the household of Stephanus... You know them.' He was referring to the way Stephanus lived in his house; but then the way he was participating with his house in a house-to-house fellowship was clearly evident to all. Paul could then say, 'I want you to be in subjection to such men.') ...if that is not happening in terms of a house-to-house fellowship and then you have a person in the presbytery, they are going to be cleaving to the messengers of Christ with deceit. It has to be true at every point.

Jesus is addressing... (that is what I am saying) ... He is addressing the symptom of a much bigger or deeper issue, which is relevant for all of us. He says in verse 5 (which is a key thing); He is proclaiming a word; He is saying, 'Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place - unless you repent.'

How do we remember? It is not an action of our mind. He is not talking about a cognitive remembrance of a past experience. To remember, there are two things that are absolutely essential. The first thing is that the word is proclaimed to us. The *word* is proclaimed. It is Christ here saying through John to this presbytery, 'Remember...' There is a word. Then the Holy Spirit is taking that word and bringing illumination and conviction in relation to that word. The Holy Spirit is able to bring to our remembrance the things that Christ has proclaimed to us.

Those two things are necessary: the word of Christ and then the activity of the Holy Spirit to bring illumination and conviction. We are then able to see what we never knew before. We are able to see what was predestined for us from before the foundation of the world. This is an amazing thing. It is only as we are illuminated that way ... it is only as we see the heights, that we see how far we have fallen. That is a very important point. It is not the other way around. It is not you see how far you have fallen first. It is you only see how far you have fallen when you see the heights of your calling. You see the fellowship of Yahweh. You are illuminated to see the fellowship of Yahweh, and you realise how far short of that you have come. It is like the prophet Isaiah, when he hears the seraphim proclaiming concerning the fellowship of Yahweh, 'Holy, holy, holy'. As he sees and he hears and he begins to understand the nature of that fellowship, he then says, 'Woe is me. I am a man of unclean lips.' We only see how far we have fallen when we are illuminated to see the heights from where we have fallen. Let us ask the basic question then: Where had the presbytery in Ephesus fallen from? There are two points here.

The first thing is that they had fallen from the heights of Zion. It is 'Remember the heights'. That is the fellowship of Yahweh and that has a personal application. That has a marriage application; that has a house application; that has a house-to-house application; that has a presbytery application. We just keep emphasising that. It is 'Remember the heights from where you have fallen.'

They had also [fallen]... (this was a different matter, so we do not just conflate these two things) ... they had also fallen from the right hand of Christ as a separate thing. Now that means that they had lost their connection to the five ministry graces of Christ which comprise His apostolic administration. Paul describes that in Ephesians chapter 4 verses 11 to 12 when he speaks of those ministry graces. We know that the church in Ephesus

had lost this connection All the presbyteries in Asia had lost this connection because Paul tells us that the whole of Asia had turned away from him. Paul had established all those lampstand churches, and he had disciplined all these men that were in all these presbyteries. I do not know what happened. I mean we do know what happened to a degree, from a historical perspective. But they all, for whatever reason, graduated beyond needing to maintain their connection to Paul and that apostolic administration. When he says that to Timothy, you can really catch the grief in his heart. He is saying, 'The whole of Asia has turned aside from me, including... [Then he nominates two specific men. I think that in the initial phase, something had happened and they graduated beyond the need for that relational connection, and they fell from the hand - the right hand of Christ.]

This is important in terms of the process of recovery, because before you can be recovered to the heights, you have to be recovered to the hand. I love this point. I am really rejoicing in this picture, and I think you will catch this as well. You have Christ seated at the right hand of God, and He is in the heights. We have to be recovered to the heights. Now where does that recovery begin? Jesus Christ reaches out His right hand from where He is. He reaches out and He lays hold of us. This is actually the point of recovery, and this is where the recovery begins. Christ reaches out His hand. I am just picturing it all the way from the heights. Right the way down to the depths. You know all those Scriptures that say that the hand of the Lord is not shortened that it cannot redeem or it cannot save. He is reaching out His hand to lay a hold of us firstly in our fallen condition. We know that Christ has fully identified with our fallen condition; He has fallen with us. Now He has ascended. He is seated at the right hand of God and He reaches out His right hand to lay a hold of us.

Practically, what this looks like is that the word is proclaimed to us by the Holy Spirit through messengers in the right hand of

Christ. We are here in our fallen condition, and the first point of reformation (the initiative) belongs to Christ, and He lays hold of a messenger. Then He is sending messengers to proclaim the word to us. That is the extension of His hand. Are you catching that? This is really what was happening for us through that whole COVID season firstly.

The Lord is reaching out His hand to us as the word is being proclaimed to us and it is being proclaimed directly to every house. You can picture the hand. It is reaching all the way out with the knuckles on the end of his hand, knocking on the door of the house and asking for access (for the word to have access) into our house. Receiving that initiative is the beginning of the recovery to the heights of Zion.

This is true for us individually, in terms of our marriage, house, and house to house, and also then the presbytery. There is an initiative of the word toward us. That is why I am saying it needs those two things - the word 'remember' proclaimed, and then also the illumination and conviction of the Holy Spirit in relation to that word.

The outcome of this illumination is that we become bankrupt in spirit. This is a place of faith. We see that Christ has fallen with us and has authored the pathway of our recovery. Note, it is not bankrupt in mind; it is bankrupt in spirit. It is a place of faith, because we are not just trying to apprehend how ordinary or fallen we are. That is not what we are talking about. This is the outcome of illumination - so it is bankrupt in spirit. We see that Christ has fallen with us and has authored the pathway of our recovery. That is, He has authored our repentance and obedience.

The first work of faith is to speak. We present ourselves for fellowship. This is where we have been considering what confession looks like. This is where it begins. The first work of faith is to speak. 'I believed, therefore I spoke.' What did I say? Well, there is a confession. The confession is that I have seen both the heights and the depths together. It

is not a pathetic confession. It is a faith-filled confession. We present ourselves for fellowship, and then in the fellowship we receive the grace that is necessary for the works of obedience.

This becomes important for us in terms of understanding what the fellowship of the tree of life looks like. Can I say that sequence again? We present ourselves for fellowship. We are repenting to do the first works. What are the first works? The first work of the first works is to speak; it is to present yourself for fellowship. This is before you are doing any other works in terms of your sonship or your obedience. You are firstly getting joined to a fellowship.

Think about this from the perspective of an individual son of God. In response to the word, the Holy Spirit is helping us firstly in our weakness by joining us to the fellowship of a prayer meeting with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. He is doing that before we are finding grace in the fellowship of that prayer meeting to proceed from the prayer meeting to do the works of our sonship for that day. There is simple progression there.

I have been reflecting a bit lately, and I will share this in a few places - this simple point. This has been a very difficult one for me personally to really digest because I am a very task-orientated person. It is very easy for me... (you may be the same; you may be different; it is a bit of a temperament issue). ...for me, I am still turning from my view (my default view) that fellowship is a means to an end. I do not know whether you have registered that at all - the view that fellowship is a means to an end. 'I have a decision to make, so I need some fellowship.' Or 'I have a problem that needs to be resolved, so I need some fellowship.' Or 'I have some sin to confess, so I need some fellowship.' Or 'I have an event to plan, so I need some fellowship.' So just by default, fellowship is always a means to an end.

I remember a number of years ago (and you can probably remember this as I say it), Luke Pomery was talking about the Father. It was in and around the beginning of the year just

before COVID. His point was that the Father is the vinedresser and He is coming and He is looking for fruit. What fruit is He looking for? He is looking for the fruit of fellowship. I remember this very clearly, because this became quite a significant point for me. The Father is looking for fruit. But the fellowship is not the means. The fellowship is the fruit. It is the end.

I remember very soon after that (This will illustrate how the Holy Spirit then grabs a hold of the word and brings it to your remembrance in terms of the illumination and the conviction of it in the middle of a situation), we were preparing to go to Indonesia for the seminar which used to happen in February up there. We were busy writing and we had to get the notes up there so they could be translated before we arrived. We are writing, and of course we have been doing this for many, many years. But on this particular time, I kept hitting a brick wall. I had what you would colloquially call 'writer's block'. The problem was that there is a deadline and it needs to get up there. Also, I have said to Vic, and I have said to Pete, 'Look, I am going to have the section I was working on ready by the end of the weekend.' I am busy writing (or not writing, more to the point). Trying to write but not writing. Probably reworking one paragraph ten times or something. What also happened then was that it was the fast weekend. It is Friday of the fast and I am trying to write. On top of that, you are not thinking that clearly anyway. I am becoming more and more stressed. You are striving and not thinking very clearly and becoming more agitated and more snappy. I was not that happy to get home and have Heather ask me, 'What do you feel the Lord is saying to you over the fast?' That was not the question I was keen to answer at that point in time. There were a few other things happening. Anyway, I remember going to bed that night and waking up quite early the next morning with the Holy Spirit saying to me (this is bringing the word to my remembrance), 'You cannot write it because you have not joined the

fellowship of it.' The Lord was after me on this point of fellowship.

What I was trying to write, interestingly enough (and there is no coincidence to this) was about the first wounding event in the garden of Gethsemane. We were looking at the seven wounding events back at that time, and I am busy trying to write on the prayer meeting in the garden of Gethsemane. Here I am - I have suddenly understood that there are two prayer meetings happening. There is the prayer meeting that Christ is having - the fellowship of that prayer meeting - and He is saying, 'Watch and pray with Me.' But then there are also the disciples having a different kind of prayer meeting when they are desperately trying to keep their eyes open, but they cannot do it. They are striving and the more they are trying, the more it is not working for them. I suddenly realise I am over with them. I am not with Christ. I am here desperately praying for the Holy Spirit to help me to get my job done. Why? Because I did not want to lose my reputation. It does not look good if you do not meet the deadline or you have said you are going to deliver and you do not deliver or whatever it happens to be. There are lots of different illustrations of this, but this is the way the Lord brought it to a head for me.

I am busily praying desperately, asking the Holy Spirit to help me so I can get my job done, which I thought was a good job to do. But in reality, the Holy Spirit is there actually resisting me to bring it to a head and wanting not to help me get my job done, but to join me to the fellowship first. This is a big point.

Jesus is saying, 'The Spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.' Let us recognise the priority here. The Holy Spirit is willing to connect you to the fellowship of the prayer meeting, and then in that fellowship, you will find grace to do the job which Christ has already done for you. This was a big lesson. It is fellowship first. This is the application in relation to all these elements of recovery. The Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of fellowship, wants to join us to the fellowship

before He is helping us with the works of our obedience that proceed from the fellowship.

Look at this in terms of a marriage. What is the Lord most interested in? He is interested in establishing the fellowship between husband and wife in the fellowship of Yahweh. Then, what is He most interested in in terms of a house? It is not who is doing all the jobs firstly. It is the *fellowship*. He wants the blessing of peace to be resting on the house. Then, as we are gathering as a congregation, it is the fellowship of the *agape* meal; it is our fellowship together that is being recovered, and everything then is proceeding from that.

We can identify then the first works in relation to what it looks like for an individual. We are presenting ourselves to be disciplined as individuals and disciplined in terms of what it means to abide in the name of the Father, the name of the Son, the name of the Holy Spirit.

We can look at what the first works look like that are proceeding from a fellowship in terms of a marriage. A husband is laying down his life for his wife and the wife is submitting to her husband. There are first works that are proceeding once it is connected properly to the fellowship.

Then you have the first works in a house. Parents are raising their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord and children are learning to be obedient to their parents. All these things are proceeding once it is connected properly to the fellowship.

Then you are looking at a congregation, and you see all the houses devoted to the apostles' doctrine, to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. This is the recovery of first love and what it looks like.

Then there is a presbytery. Again, we are firstly being recovered to be able to present ourselves, so that we can be sent from that fellowship to go and do our work. Again, we come back to Isaiah, and it is firstly, 'Here I am.' I am presenting myself for fellowship; but then, 'Send me.' He is ready to go and do his work, but he is proceeding from the

fellowship. The first work for a presbytery then includes the willingness of each presbyter to speak in the presbytery and then to be sent from the presbytery to walk among the congregations that belong to their lampstand church. We have written that in the book.

I am just putting some content in behind what we have written, which was not really understood (and certainly not from my perspective) when we wrote it. We are a few months on now, so we are just gathering it all up. Jesus addressed the presbytery in Ephesus as the One who holds the seven stars and walks among the seven lampstands because the first work of a star in the right hand of Christ is to walk.

Let us read the final verse here because we are looking at the promises. Revelation 2 verse 7: 'He who has an ear let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.' We are exhorted to remember from where we have fallen. I will gather up where Vic was at Easter - then a little bit too in relation to this, because that was another big step forward in terms of understanding this verse.

The Spirit is calling us back to the nature of the fellowship that Adam had with Yahweh *Elohim* at the tree of life in the beginning, remembering that Adam had dominion over the whole natural creation, whenever he remained connected to this fellowship at the tree of life, where he was receiving the word of the Father from Christ by the Holy Spirit. That was the word of his obedience. His dominion then over the natural creation was according to his name as an expression of his faith obedience from this fellowship. He is proceeding from a fellowship.

Now, for us then, the tree of life is Christ. We have this word from the beginning which is incarnate now in Christ. John says, 'That which was from the beginning [and then talking about Christ Himself in the first case], that which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, we have looked

upon which our hands have handled, concerning the word of life.' He is the tree of life. The fruit of the tree of life is the bread of life which comes down from heaven.

You can think on this because there is a progressive recovery of dominion as we are connected to the fellowship of the tree of life. It is not dominion over the natural creation yet. We see that in the millennium; but if you go and try to start bossing a lion around now, that is probably not going to go too well just yet. So hold off on that. We do not yet have dominion over all the animals. I have a lot of trouble with my dog and have not quite recovered dominion yet. So we will just wait. It is not yet dominion over the nations. That is what is recovered when the Father takes His seat and the mountain of the Lord's house is established over all the kingdoms of this world - over all the nations.

But as we are connected to the tree of life now (I am talking individually), there is a recovery of dominion in relation to your name as a son of God. You are finding deliverance and rulership over the fear of death. You are finding deliverance and rulership over the law of sin. You are finding deliverance and authority over unclean spirits. This all belongs to the dominion that is being recovered when we are properly connected to the fellowship of the tree of life through the word that is being proclaimed to us. We are finding then the capacity to do the works of our sonship.

What this looks like is what Paul calls 'reigning in life'. We will read that verse as we finish. This is Romans 5 verse 17: 'If by one man's offence death reigned through the one [we are talking dominion lost], much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.' There is a gift of righteousness that you have received in terms of the incorruptible seed. You are born as a son of God and that seed contains the package of your name and works as a son of God. It is a gift given to you. You are connected to the offering of Christ and you are receiving an abundance of grace. The

grace as the sevenfold Spirit of Yahweh in the fellowship of His offering. As the word is being proclaimed to you, you are connected to the fellowship of the tree of life and so you are finding capacity to reign (that is dominion) in life. We are looking at the revelation of sonship.

Smyrna and Philadelphia

I will be looking at the letter to the church in Philadelphia. I was introduced to the songs of the seven churches last night, so that was something new for me. I do appreciate that as we are reading some of these verses, some of you have a certain melody and musical accompaniment that is immediately springing to mind. We do not have the trumpet introduction to the song of Philadelphia this morning, but I do appreciate that is how some of you are hearing it.

The church in Philadelphia is the church of brotherly love. It is helpful in one way to approach this letter as the sequel to the admonition (or the letter) to Ephesus that we were looking at yesterday. The name 'Philadelphia' means 'brotherly love'. They have evidently been recovered to the foremost of loves and 'greater love has no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.' [John 15:13]. They have been recovered to that.

We were talking yesterday that the presbytery in Ephesus (and that lampstand church) had fallen from the heights of Zion, but they had also fallen from the right hand of Christ. They had lost their connection to the ascension gift ministry graces of Christ.

The first step of restoration (or recovery) to first love is that Jesus Christ, seated at the right hand of God, reaches out His right hand from the heights and He lays hold of a messenger. He then sends them to proclaim the word, and the word is the call to remember. That is firstly a word that is proclaimed. It is a command. The word is proclaimed to us and then the Holy Spirit is bringing illumination and conviction so that we can turn in response to that word. We can see the heights and appreciate from where

we have fallen. There is a pathway of recovery and restoration as we continue to receive that word. We are recovered to the right hand of Christ first as we are receiving that word. Christ with His right hand is knocking on the door of every house. We are opening the door; we are receiving that word. As we continue to walk in the light of that word, that is the pathway of recovery and restoration to the heights of Zion (to first love) which is the fellowship of Yahweh. That will then be seen for us individually as sons of God; and in our marriages (as we said yesterday); then in our houses; then in our house-to-house fellowship as congregations, and then also in the presbytery. The letter here to Philadelphia is to a church that has been recovered to first love.

I want to keep working on this theme of dominion a little bit as well. We said yesterday that we are being recovered and given access to the tree of life and to the fellowship of the tree of life. When we are connected to that fellowship, there is a recovery of dominion that begins. The first dimension of that is being recovered to the authority that belongs to your name. We are receiving the word of the Father from Christ by the Holy Spirit, and it is proclaimed to us through the messengers that are in the right hand of Christ. As we are receiving that word, we are being recovered and finding the capacity (I am loving this phrase, in terms of the first dimension of dominion that Paul describes as to be) 'reigning in life'. It is the way he describes it in Romans chapter 5 – 'reigning in life'. To me, that phrase captures the dimension of dominion - but the dominion that is only recovered in the fellowship of the tree of life. Reigning in life then is not being successful in this world. It is freedom from fear. It is freedom and dominion (or rulership) over the law of sin. It is freedom and rulership over all the unclean spirits that have oppressed or afflicted our households. It is the capacity... (coming to us in the word) ...it is the capacity for faith obedience; it is the capacity to fulfill the works of our sonship. That is what it looks like to reign in life.

That brings us then to the promise to the second church, which is the church in Smyrna. The letter to Philadelphia is also the sequel. All these themes are gathered up as we continue to read the letters to the seven churches and there is a progressive attainment as we have been saying. The letter to Philadelphia is something of a sequel to the letter to Smyrna as well, because Jesus says to Philadelphia, 'Hold fast what you have, see to it that no one takes your crown.' They have evidently received the crown of life. The crown of life was promised to the presbytery and lampstand church in Smyrna. Jesus said to them in Revelation 2 verse 10, 'Do not fear any of those things... [this theme is recurring as well, 'Do not fear.' There is a word of faith here.] ...Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested... [There is a trial of faith that is going to prove something and produce something] ...that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful unto death [He is saying, 'Be faithful, be conformed to My death... [That is the death of Christ - His death] ...Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.'

The crown of life describes the capacity for kingship and priesthood. It is a dual crown that we receive in our mortality here and now as we receive the power of Christ's resurrection life in the fellowship of His seven wounding events. It is the capacity to proclaim the word and minister the power of God through weakness. As has been said to us, we are joined to the weakness of Christ. We are joined to the weakness of His crucifixion; but Christ is not presently seated in weakness at the right hand of God. He is glorified and seated in power. He possesses the power of the seven Spirits of God, and the word that is being ministered as we minister in *weakness* is a word that is full of *power* - able to accomplish everything that it proclaims. It is inherent with life and capacity and power. We minister in weakness, but the word we are ministering

is powerful. There is a recovery of dominion which is the authority to proclaim the word of God. That word cannot be imprisoned. We are looking at this progressive recovery of dominion and getting to Philadelphia because Philadelphia received the crown. Then there is a further dimension of dominion that they are recovering. Christ addresses them as 'the One who has the key of David' - the keys of the kingdom. We have just heard that He says, 'If I close the door, no one can open it. But if I open the door, no one can close it.' He is saying to them, 'Behold, I have put before you an open door.'

I want to highlight that the open door is put before us as we are being recovered. We are being recovered to the degree that we are being recovered to first love; participating in the fellowship that belongs to the tree of life; finding the testimony of reformation as sons of God; finding reformation in our marriages; reformation in our families; reformation in our house-to-house fellowship as congregations. To the degree that we are finding that testimony, the Lord will also then be putting an open door before us as the opportunity to proclaim that testimony particularly among all the unclean daughters of Zion. We are believing for this - that there is a word to proclaim among the unclean daughters of Zion. It is not just a better theology or more information. It is the word of power that is proclaimed in weakness as a testimony. It has the capacity to minister resurrection life.

There is a further dimension here of dominion for Philadelphia, because as with Smyrna, they were afflicted by the synagogue of Satan. There is an interesting parallel here with Joseph. Joseph received the word concerning his predestination, but then he was persecuted by his brothers who behaved like a synagogue of Satan. They throw him into the pit and then they sell him to the slave traders who take him down to Egypt. It initiates a whole season of suffering and persecution for him. It is a trial of faith. Until the time for his word (until the time arrived for that word) to come to pass, that

word tested him. It is producing something in him which is more precious than gold. He is receiving in type a crown of life at the end of that trial. In the second time of the word, all the brothers who had previously behaved like a synagogue of Satan and betrayed him and persecuted him, all come and bow down at his feet because he has the mandate to feed them and the entire world with the bread of life.

With Philadelphia, the synagogue of Satan comes, and they bow down at their feet because there is an open door to minister the bread which is the fruit of the tree of life. That is another dimension of dominion that is recovered, particularly among the unclean daughters of Zion. This is before the Father takes His seat when the presbytery, that is seated around the throne of the Father, will have the mandate to feed the whole world with the bread of life. You see these dimensions of recovery of dominion that belong to the tree of life.

Let us go to Revelation chapter 3. We will talk about the promise to Philadelphia. This is Revelation chapter 3 verse 12. Jesus said, 'He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God.' That immediately draws our attention to the time when the Father takes His seat, and He spreads His tabernacle over us – 'the 'temple of My God' - the Father. The Father spreads His tabernacle, but it is like He is preparing all the pillars for the tabernacle in advance. He is preparing the pillars, and then He is going to spread His tabernacle over them. All those pillars will be burden-bearing - inherent to the whole fabric of the incarnate Father's tabernacle on the earth.

'... To him who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God and I will write on him My new name.'

We have referenced in the book the two pillars that were at the doorway of the temple of Solomon. They did not belong to

the temple of Solomon in that sense. They had no structural purpose. They were not holding a roof up; they were not doing anything. They were types - they were memorials of a future kind of pillar that belong to a new tabernacle. One of them was called Jachin: it had a name inscribed on it and one of them had the name Boaz inscribed upon it. I think the meaning of those names is significant because Jachin means 'God will establish' and Boaz means 'in Him is strength'.

That draws my attention to 1 Peter 5 verse 10 where Peter says (this is in the context of resisting the devil and standing firm and all those kind of things), 'May the God of all grace... [this is talking about the manifold grace of God - the seven Spirits of God] ... may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while... [You are emerging from the trial of faith with a crown, and the Lord has formed something in you. It is substantial. It is able to carry a load] ... after you have suffered a while, [God will] perfect, establish, strengthen and settle you.' Can you hear in that the name Jachin and Boaz? 'God will establish' and 'in Him is strength'. We have the formation of pillars.

Jesus said that each pillar in the true temple of God will have a threefold name: the name of the Father, the name of the bride city and their name as a son of God. We receive that now. The promise to him who overcomes is not to get the names. The promise to him who overcomes is to become a pillar. But then the names are designating what kind of pillar you are. We have the possession of those names now.

We have been looking at that concerning the pathway (or the steps) of salvation. Christ firstly comes and dwells in a person's heart and then He asks the Father to send the Holy Spirit also into their heart and the Holy Spirit is convicting them of sin, righteousness and judgement. The summary of that conviction is, 'Do you want to be a son of God?' When the person responds, 'Yes, I want to be a son of God', Jesus Christ

Himself then writes on the fleshly tablet of their heart. He writes the name of the Father and He writes the name of the heavenly Jerusalem and then sends the Holy Spirit into their spirit. The Holy Spirit then seals that what Christ has written is true. That person belongs to the Father. You have been adopted as a son of God. They belong to the heavenly Jerusalem. Their citizenship is in heaven, and the Holy Spirit, as the Spirit of adoption, enables that person then to cry out, 'Abba! Father! You are my Father.' The Father then sends the incorruptible seed of their sonship into their spirit. That seed contains the life of Christ, but also their unique name as a son of God. The Holy Spirit enables that seed to germinate in their spirit and they are born again as a son of God. A completely new creation. Then you have this new creation that is going to be connected to the fellowship of Christ (His offering and sufferings) and will emerge (as they are disciplined) to become a pillar in the temple of God or the Father's tabernacle. That is the kind of pillar we are looking at.

I was reflecting (and again we have written in the book) that the ministry that belongs to a pillar in the temple of God is prayer and worship. We need to add something to that. I was reflecting on Anna the prophetess. She is something of a type for us. We will not read these Scriptures, but this is Luke chapter 2 verses 36 to 38. It tells us that there is a woman whose name is Anna (that means 'grace'). She is a prophetess and she was married for seven years and then widowed for most of her life. She is 84 years old. She is serving day and night in the temple. This gives you the picture of a pillar in the temple - serving day and night. She is particularly looking for the redemption of Israel. It says in Luke 2 verse 38, 'And coming in that instant, she gave thanks to the Lord and spoke of Him to all who looked for redemption in Israel.' I am going to add to this ministry of prayer and worship, the ministry of 'speaking of Him to all who looked for redemption in Israel'.

This woman is a pillar; she is serving day and night in the temple; but she became very evangelistic. She is bearing witness of Christ and proclaiming that He had come for redemption in Israel. We have here the type of a lampstand church. That is what I am feeling after here. She is the type of a lampstand church that is proclaiming that the Father is soon to take His seat, and when the Father has taken His seat, Jesus Christ is coming. It is this message now, 'Lift up your heads. The day of your redemption is drawing near.' We have this ministry that belongs to a pillar.

Fulfilling the promise to the overcomers in Philadelphia, the ministry of prayer and worship will be the focus of the presbytery around the throne of the Father. What we have been looking at in this season is where David [Black] finished - the travail of the whole church. All the worthy houses that belong to the church; the travail that is bringing forth this administration that is suitable for the fullness of times; the presbytery around the Father's throne, and then 144 000. When that administration is brought forth, it will also have a ministry of prayer and worship, which is integral to the opening of the door for the gospel to be proclaimed to the ends of the earth. The presbytery around the throne of the Father will have golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. The presbytery will also have harps as instruments of worship and will proclaim the worthiness of the Lamb to open the seven seals for the purpose of revealing the Father's will on the earth.

I want to work on this: 'They will go out no more', because that is an interesting statement. I have looked at Anna for a purpose because she is constantly in the temple; but then, she is serving the Lord day and night; but then she has this remarkable evangelistic ministry. When it says they will 'go out no more', it is not saying that they will not go out from the temple into the world to proclaim the gospel, because once the Father takes His seat, that is the beginning of the

most remarkable going out and proclaiming of the gospel that we have ever seen since the beginning of the creation. What does it mean 'they will go out no more'? It does not preclude the evangelistic ministry of the church that goes out from the temple and into the world. Rather, it is the promise of protection under the shelter of the Father's tabernacle. Just picture it. The Lord is now preparing all the pillars. Then the Father will take His seat, spread His tabernacle out over all those pillars, and those pillars become integral to the Father's tabernacle itself and they will never cease to be so. 'They go out no more.' It is the promise of protection under the shelter of that tabernacle.

This is Revelation chapter 3 verse 10 and Jesus says this specifically to the church of Philadelphia. He says, 'Because you have kept my command to persevere... [It is after you have suffered for a while, so you have endured the trial of faith] ...Because you have kept my command to persevere, I will also keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world to test those who dwell on the earth.' We are very familiar with the verses in Isaiah chapter 4 verses 5 to 6. Verse 5 says, 'Then the Lord [this is after He cleanses the unclean daughters of Zion] will create above every dwelling place of Mount Zion [We are being recovered now to the heights of Zion and that is where our house belongs.] Then, the Father is going to [spread His tabernacle or] create above every dwelling place, [I just read there every house, every household, every dwelling place that belongs to Mount Zion] and above her assemblies... [that is an interesting one - above the house-to-house fellowship that belongs to the church - the public and house-to-house ministry of the church, there is also going to be a protection.] ...and above her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day and the shining of a flaming fire by night. For over all the glory there will be a covering.'

The Lord is speaking to us about being recovered as a lampstand church now. And as we have already heard, the building

blocks of a lampstand church are worthy houses that are then being disciplined to become firstfruits houses; so there is an overflow of ministry. A lampstand church is revealing the glory of the seven Spirits of God. It is revealing the glory of God that shines from the face of Jesus Christ. Every house that belongs to that ministry - over all the glory... Isaiah said in Isaiah 60 verse 1, 'Arise, shine for your light has come and the glory of the Lord is risen upon you. For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth and deep darkness the people. But the Lord will arise over you. The Gentiles shall come to your light and kings to the brightness of your rising.'

We are being recovered now so that we can reveal the glory of God that shines from the face of Christ as part of a lampstand administration. If we are restored to that, then over all that glory He then places a covering of protection. It is not hindering the glory from being seen. It is a very unique kind of covering; it is transparent in the sense that the glory can shine to the ends of the earth, but at the same time it is completely protected. That will be a tricky one for the kids to draw. The rain cannot get through, so it is pretty solid in terms of protection; but it does not inhibit the glory from being seen to the ends of the earth. '... Over all the glory there will be a covering and there will be a tabernacle for shade in the daytime from the heat, for a place of refuge and for a shelter from storm and rain.'

In Revelation chapter 7 verses 15 to 16, you will see that. What I am saying is it is not just the presbytery around the Father's throne that received the promise of being pillars, it is also the 144 000 that go out to look for worthy houses. They are equally pillars. I do think (as a good representative of someone who belongs to the 144 000) of Stephanus. I do think his home is the representative of worthy firstfruits houses. Regarding Stephanus, the congregation knew his house. They knew he was devoted to the care of the saints. There is an overflow of ministry from his house. It is from worthy,

through discipleship, to firstfruits, and then going and looking for worthy houses.

As the 144 000 go out, they will find a great multitude of worthy houses and they all come in. The same statement is made – ‘the Father spreads His tabernacle over them.’ They become part of the Father’s tabernacle; They become pillars that belong to that tabernacle, and then it is their evangelistic ministry that harvests over half of the world’s population. You can see how there is a fellowship in the reward. There is a fellowship in the inheritance of the promises. It is from the presbytery with 144 000, to a great multitude of worthy houses, to this innumerable company that comes in.

It says (concerning this great multitude of worthy houses) in Revelation chapter 7 verse 15 almost the same statement as was said concerning Anna. It says, ‘Therefore they are before the throne of God and serve Him day and night in His temple. [They go out no more] And He who sits on the throne will dwell among them [or spread His tabernacle over them. It is a place of protection and provision]. They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore. The sun shall not strike them nor any heat.’ Can you be encouraged that that is what the Lord is calling you to?

I will quote another couple of passages here as I close to commend these to you. Isaiah 32 verse 18: ‘My people will dwell in a peaceful habitation... [That is the blessing of peace resting on a house – ‘in a peaceful habitation’ - not the absence of all conflict, but a house of fellowship. Peace is fellowship.] ...in a peaceful habitation, in secure dwellings, and in quiet resting places.’

Psalms 91 verse 1: ‘He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty... [Then down to verse 9] ...because you have made the Lord who is my refuge even the Most High your dwelling place... [keep in mind we are being recovered so that the Most High is becoming our dwelling place. We are abiding in the fellowship of Yahweh. This is what we are being disciplined to learn. It is how do we

abide in that fellowship? What does it mean to abide in the name of the Father, in the name of the Son, and in the name of the Holy Spirit? We are learning this. This is becoming our dwelling place] ...even the Most High your dwelling place. No evil shall befall you, nor shall any plague come near your dwelling [or near your house].’

In the time of the end (and this will be true in a firstfruits measure now as well), as we are becoming pillars, not only is our house protected, and not only is there a revelation of glory and a protection in relation to our houses, but also our houses are a place of protection and access for others to come into the Father’s tabernacle and find the same provision and protection. Do you love the thought of that? It is not only that your house is protected - but your house is also a little refuge, a place of protection for others to come and find the same provision and protection that we are finding.